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Plasterers and Stucco Masons apply decorative and protective materials to walls and ceilings of buildings. Plaster is generally used inside a building, because it isn't waterproof. Stucco, on the other hand, can stand up to the weather and is generally used on exterior walls and ceilings.

The materials are similar in the way they are prepared and applied. Both are mixtures of a dry powder, additives, and water. In the case of plaster, specially prepared gypsum is mixed with water, sand, and other materials designed to make the mixture harder, more wear resistant, and less likely to crack.

Traditionally, the interior walls of homes were covered with plaster. Since plaster needs something to stick to, thin wooden strips called lath were nailed to the wall's wood studs. Three coats of plaster were then spread over the lath.

Today, this is rarely done although metal lath covered with plaster can form curves and other shapes not possible with wooden lath. Most plasterers today apply plaster over a gypsum board substrate. This skim coat makes the walls much less likely to be dented in day-to-day activities. It can also help hide imperfections that may be present such as an irregular appearance of the drywall.

Stucco Masons apply stucco in much the same way to exterior walls. Stucco is a cement-based product much like concrete but without stones (aggregate). Stucco Masons prepare the surface to be stuccoed by first attaching a protective layer of tarpaper or housewrapping fabric. They then attach stucco wire to the house. Then, three layers of stucco is applied. Once the stucco dries, it is generally painted for a nice, decorative look.

Tasks

- ▶ Apply coats of plaster or stucco to walls, ceilings, or partitions of buildings, using trowels, brushes, or spray guns.
- ▶ Apply weatherproof, decorative coverings to exterior surfaces of buildings, such as troweling or spraying on coats of stucco.
- ▶ Clean and prepare surfaces for applications of plaster, cement, stucco, or similar materials, such as by drywall taping.
- ▶ Cure freshly plastered surfaces.

Plasterers and Stucco Masons

- ▶ Install guidewires on exterior surfaces of buildings to indicate thickness of plaster or stucco, and nail wire mesh, lath, or similar materials to the outside surface to hold stucco in place.
- ▶ Mix mortar and plaster to desired consistency or direct workers who perform mixing.
- ▶ Mold and install ornamental plaster pieces, panels, and trim.
- ▶ Rough the undercoat surface with a scratcher so the finish coat will adhere.
- ▶ Spray acoustic materials or texture finish over walls and ceilings.
- ▶ Apply insulation to building exteriors by installing prefabricated insulation systems over existing walls or by covering the outer wall with insulation board, reinforcing mesh, and a base coat.

Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ▶ Building and Construction — Knowledge of materials, methods, and the tools involved in the construction or repair of houses, buildings, or other structures such as highways and roads.
- ▶ Equipment Selection — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.
- ▶ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ▶ Installation — Installing equipment, machines, wiring, or programs to meet specifications.
- ▶ Monitoring — Monitoring/assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.
- ▶ Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- ▶ Reading Comprehension — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- ▶ Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- ▶ Wrist-Finger Speed — The ability to make fast, simple, repeated movements of the fingers, hands, and wrists.
- ▶ Arm-Hand Steadiness — The ability to keep your hand and arm steady while moving your arm or while holding your arm and hand in one position.
- ▶ Finger Dexterity — The ability to make precisely coordinated movements of the fingers of one or both hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble very small objects.

Work Environment

Plasterers generally work indoors, while Stucco Masons work outdoors. The difference means that Plasterers can work when it is raining, cold, hot, and in other weather conditions that might stop a Stucco Mason from working altogether. They do have to think about the weather, though, because very hot, very cold, humid, or dry weather will affect how plaster will dry.

Stucco Masons are exposed to the heat from the sun, cold during the winter, rain during the rainy season, as well as windy, dusty days. The material can be applied in some of those adverse conditions, but the Mason must make sure the job doesn't suffer, even if he or she is!

Plasterers and Stucco Masons

The work can be dirty and somewhat risky, as some plaster and stucco are applied while standing on ladders or scaffolding. These workers must wear protective clothing including masks and goggles when necessary. The work can be quite physically demanding.

Plasterers and Stucco Masons generally work a regular day shift, Monday through Friday, although overtime and weekend work is not uncommon. Some Plasterers and Stucco Masons belong to unions such as the Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association or the International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers.

California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
Plasterers and Stucco Masons				
47-2161	19,000	21,600	610	\$13.71 to \$23.34

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment of Plasterers and Stucco Masons will grow much slower than average compared with all occupations in California over the 2004–2014 period. Because of newer construction materials, as well as the inherent properties of plaster and stucco, this ancient trade continues to enjoy popularity among California's property owners, builders, and remodelers.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

Plasterers and Stucco Masons usually follow one of the following training paths:

- ▶ Formal, four-year apprenticeship
- ▶ Vocational school
- ▶ Community college programs or certificates
- ▶ Extensive on-the-job training

Training in the four-year apprenticeship program consists of classroom and on-the-job training. Apprentices learn about different types of plaster and other materials, as well as how to prepare and apply plaster and other products. In some ways, applying plaster and stucco requires artistry and an eye for design.

Recommended High School Course Work

Most employers prefer applicants who have at least a high school diploma or equivalent. High school preparation should include courses in shop, basic mathematics, and English.

Plasterers and Stucco Masons

Construction Careers

Where Do I Find the Job?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Union members can sometimes find jobs through the union hiring hall.

Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following construction industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ▶ Commercial Building
- ▶ Industrial Building
- ▶ New Multifamily Housing
- ▶ New Single-Family Housing
- ▶ Residential Remodelers

For local listings of contractors, search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ▶ Commercial and Industrial Contractors
- ▶ General Building Contractors
- ▶ Plastering Contractors
- ▶ Stucco and Coating Contractors

Where Can The Job Lead?

Some Plasterers and Stucco Masons leave to start their own companies. Others may work for a large company and become supervisors. Since plastering and stucco application is somewhat of an art, some workers may gain a reputation for creativity and be in demand with prestige builders. California's Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board offers a specialty contractor's license in lathing and plastering.

Other Sources of Information

Operative Plasterers' and Cement Masons' International Association
www.opcmia.org

Stucco Manufacturers Association
www.stuccomfgassoc.com

Plastering Contractors Association of Southern California
www.plasteringcontractors.org

International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers
www.bacweb.org

California Department of Consumer Affairs, Contractors State License Board
www.cslb.ca.gov

California Department of Industrial Relations
www.dir.ca.gov